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OF "OURS."

No. 2.

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CHAPTER IV.

MY WANDERINGS.

I CANNOT deny it, the horrible imprecation I had heard uttered against me, seemed to fill up the cup of my misery. An outcast, without home, without a friend, this alone was wanting to overwhelm me with very wretchedness; and as I covered my face with both hands, I thought my heart would break.

"Come, come, Master Tom," said Darby, "don't be afeard, it 'ill never do you harm, all she said. I made the sign of the cross on the road between you and her with the end of my stick, and you're safe enough this time. Faix, she's a quare divil when she's roused—to destroy an illigint pot of praties that way; but sure she had hard provocation—well, well, you warn't to blame any how: Tony Basset will have a sore reckoning some day for all this."

The mention of that name recalled me in a moment to the consideration of my own danger if he were to succeed in overtaking me, and I eagerly communicated my fear to Darby.

"That's thrue," said he; "we must leave the high road, for Basset will be up at the house by this, and will lose no time in following you out. If you had a bit of something to eat."

"As to that Darby," said I, with a sickly effort to smile, "Peg's curse took away my appetite, full as well as her potatoes would have done."

"'Tis a bad way to breakfast after all," said Darby. "Do you ever take a shaugh of the pipe, Master Tom?"

"No," said I laughing, "I never learned to smoke yet."

"Well," replied he, a little piqued by the tone of my answer, "'tis worse you might be doin' than that same. Tobacco's a fine thing for the heart! Many's the time when I'm alone, if I hadn't the pipe, I'd be low and sorrowful—thinking over the hard times, and the like; but when I've filled my dudeen, and do be watching the smoke curling up, I begin dhraming about sitting around the fire with pleasant companions, chatting away, and discoorsing, and telling stories; and then I invint the stories to myself, about quare devils of pipers travelling over the country, making love here and there, and playing dhroll tunes out of their own heads; and then I make the tunes to them; and after that, maybe, I make words, and sometimes lay down the pipe and begin singing to myself; and often I take up the bagpipes and play away with all my might, 'till I think I see the darlingest little fairies ever you seen dancing before me, setting to one another, and turning round, and capering away—down the middle and up again: small chaps with three-cornered hats, and wigs, and little red coats,

all slashed with goold; and beautiful little craytures houlding their petticoats this way, to show a nate leg and foot; and I do be calling out to them—'hands round'—'that's your sowl'—'look at the green fellow—'tis himself can do it'—'rise the jig, hoo!' and faix 'tis sorry enough I'm when they go, and lave me all alone by myself."

"And how does all that come into your head, Darby?"

"Troth, 'tis hard to tell," said Darby, with a sigh; "but my notion is, that the poor man that has neither fine houses, nor fine clothes, nor horses, nor sarvants to amuse him, that Providence is kind to him in another way, and fills his mind with all manner of dhroll thoughts, and quare stories, and bits of songs, and the like; and lets him into many a sacret about fairies, and the good people, that the rich has no time for: and sure you must have often remarked it, that the quality has never a bit of fun in them at all, but does be always coming to us for something to make them laugh. Did you never lave the parlour, when the company was sitting with lashings of wine and fruit, and every convaniency, and go down stairs to the kitchin, where maybe there was nothing but a salt herrin' and a jug of punch, and if you did, where was the most fun I wondher? Arrah, when they bid me play a tune for them, and I look at their sorrowful, pale faces, and their dim eyes, and the stiff way they sit upon their chairs, I never put heart in it; but when I rise, 'Dirty James,' or 'The Little Bould Fox,' or 'Kiss my Lady,' for the boys and girls, sure 'tis my whole sowl does be in the bag, and I squeeze the notes out of it with all my might."

In this way did Darby converse until we reached a cross road, when, coming to a halt, he pointed with his finger to the distance and said—

"Athlone is down beyant that low mountain. Now Ned Malone's is only six short miles from this. You keep this by-road till you reach the smith's forge, then turn off to the lift, across the fields, till you come to an ould ruin, lave that to your right hand, and follow the boreen straight, 'twill bring you to Ned's doore."

"But I don't know him," said I.

"What signifies that—sure 'tis no need you have—tell him you'll stop there till Darby the Blast comes for you; and see now, here's all you have to do—put your right thumb in the palm of your lift hand this way, and then kiss the other thumb, then you have it; but mind don't do that till you're alone with him—'tis a token between ourselves."

"I wish you were coming with me, Darby—I'd rather not leave you!"

"'Tis myself mislikes it too," said Darby with a sigh; "but I darn't miss going to Athlone, the major would soon ferret me out—and it's worse it would be for me."

"And what am I to do if Mr. Basset comes after me?"

"If he hasn't a throop of horse at his back, you may laugh at him in Ned Malone's; and now good-by, acushla, and don't let your heart be low—you'll be a man soon you know."

The words of encouragement could not have been more happily chosen to raise my drooping spirits: the sense of opening manhood was already stirring within me, and waited but for some direct occasion to elicit it in full vigour.

I shook Darby's hand with a firm grasp, and, asuming the easiest smile I could accomplish, set out on the path before me, with all the alacity in my power.

The first thought that shot across my mind when I parted with my companion, was the utter loneliness of my condition; the next, and it followed imediately on the other, was the bold consciousness of personal freedom. I enjoyed at the moment the untrammelled liberty to wander, without let or control; all memory of Tony Basset was forgotten, and I only remembered the restraint of school and the tyranny of my master. My plan—and already I had formed a plan—was, to become a farmer's servant—to work as a daily labourer. Ned Malone would probably accept of me, young as I was, in this capacity; and I had no other ambition than such as secured my independence.

As I travelled along, I wove within my mind a whole web of imaginary circumstances, of days of peaceful toil—of nights of happy and contented rest—of friendship formed with those of my own age and condition—of the long summer evenings, when I should ramble alone to commune with myself on my humble but happy lot—on the red hearth in winter, around which the merry faces of the cottagers were beaming, as some pleasant tale was told; and as I asked myself, would I exchange a life like this, for all the advantages of fortune my brother's position afforded him, my heart replied—no. Even then the words of the piper had worked upon me, and already had I connected the possession of wealth with oppression and tyranny, and the lowly fortunes of the poor man, as alone securing high-souled liberty of thought, and freedom of speech and action.

I trudged along through the storm, turning from time to time to see that I was not pursued; for as the day waned my fear of being overtaken increased, and in every moaning of the wind, and every rustle of the branches, I thought I heard Tony Basset summoning me to stop and surrender myself his prisoner. This dread gradually gave way, as the loneliness of the road was unbroken by a single traveller—the wild half-tilled fields presented no living object far or near—the thick rain swooped along the swampy earth, and, in its misty darkness, shut out all distant prospect, and a sadder picture eye never rested on.

At length I reached the ruined church Darby spoke of, and following the track he indicated, soon came out upon the boreen, where for the first time some little shelter existed.

It was only at night-fall, when fatigue and hunger had nearly obtained the victory over me, that I saw at some short distance in front, the long roof of a well-thatched cabin; as I came nearer, I could perceive that it contained several windows, and that the door was sheltered by a small porch—marks of comfort by no means common among the neighbouring farmers—lights moved here and there through

the cabin, and the voices of people driving in the cows, and the barking of dogs, were welcome sounds to my ear. A half-clad urchin, of some seven years old, armed with a huge bramble, was driving a flock of turkeys before him as I approached; but instead of replying to my question, "If this were Ned Malone's?" the little fellow threw down his weapon, and ran for his life. Before I could recover from my surprise at his strange conduct, the door opened, and a large, powerful-looking man, in a long, blue coat, appeared. He carried a musket in his hand, which, as soon as he perceived the figure before him, he laid down within the porch, calling out to some one inside—

"Go back, Maurice—it's nothing. Well, sir," continued he, addressing me, "do you want anybody hereabouts?"

"Is this Ned Malone's, may I ask?" said I.

"It is," answered he, "and I am Ned Malone, at your service, and what then?"

There was something in the cold, forbidding tone in which he spoke, as well as in the hard severity of his look, that froze all my resolution to ask a favour, and I would gladly have sought elsewhere for shelter for the night, had I known where to look.

The delay this indecision on my part created caused him to repeat his question, while he fixed his eyes on me with a dark and piercing expression.

"Darby the Blast told me," said I, with a great effort to seem at ease, "that you would give me shelter to-night. To-morrow morning he's to come here for me."

"And who are you," said he, harshly, "that I'm to take into my house? In these troublesome times, a man may ask the name of his lodger?"

"My name is Burke. My father was Burke of Cremore, but he's dead now."

"'Tis you that Basset is after all day—is it?"

"I can't tell, but I fear it may be."

"Well, some one told him that you took the Dublin road, and another sent him up here, and the boys here sent him to Durragh. And what are you after, young gentleman? do you dislike Tony Basset? Is that it?"

"Yes," said I, "I'm resolved never to go home and live with him. He made my father hate me, and through him I have been left a beggar."

"There's more than you has a score to settle with Tony. Come into the house and get your clothes dried——But stop, I have a bit of a caution to give you. If you see any thing or any body while you're under my roof that you didn't expect——"

"Trust me there," interrupted I, eagerly, and making the sign the piper had taught me.

"What!" cried Malone, in astonishment, "are you one of us? Is a son of Matt Burke's going to redress the wrongs his father and grandfather before him inflicted? Give me your hand, my brave boy; there's nothing in this house isn't your own from this minit."

I grasped his strong hand in mine, and with a proud and swelling heart followed him into the cabin.

A whisper crept round the various persons that sat and stood about the kitchen fire as I appeared among them; and the next moment one after another pressed anxiously forward to shake hands with me.

"Help him off with his wet clothes, Maurice," said Malone, to a young man of some twenty years; and in a few seconds my wet garments were hung on chairs before the blaze, and I myself, accommodated with a frize coat that would make a waistcoat for an elephant, sat basking before the cheerful turf fire. The savoury steam of a great mess of meat and potatoes induced me to peep into the large pot over the fire—a hearty burst of laughing from the whole party acknowledged their detection of my ravenous hunger, and the supper was smoking on the board in a few minutes after. Unhappily, a good number of years have rolled over my head since that night; but I still hesitate to decide whether to my appetite or to Mrs. Malone's cookery I should attribute it, but certainly my performance on that occasion called forth unqualified admiration.

I observed, during the supper, that one of the girls carried a plateful of the savoury dish into a small room at the end of the kitchen, carefully closing the door after her as she entered, and when she came out exchanging with Malone a few hurried words, to which the attention of the others was evidently directed. The caution I had already received, and my own sense of propriety, prevented my paying any attention to this, and I conversed with those about me, freely narrating the whole circumstances of my departure from home, my fear of Basset, and my firm resolve, come what might, never to become an inmate of his house and family. Not all the interest they took in my fortunes, nor even their warm praises of what they called my courage and manliness, could ward off the tendency to sleep; and my eyes actually closed as I lay down in my bed, and, notwithstanding the noise of voices and the sounds of laughter so near me, sank into the heaviest slumber.

CHAPTER V.

THE CABIN.

Before day broke, the stir and bustle of the household awoke me; and had it not been for the half-open door which permitted a view of the proceedings in the kitchen, I should have been sadly puzzled to remember where I was. The cheerful turf fire, the happy faces, and the pleasant voices, all reminded me of the preceding night, and I lay pondering over my fortunes, and revolving within myself many a plan for the future.

In all the day-dreams of ambition in which youth indulges, there is this advantage over the projects of maturer years—the past never mingles with the future. In after life our by-gone existence is ever tinging the time to come: the expectations friends have formed of us, the promises we have made to our own hearts, the hopes we have created—seem to pledge us to something, which, if unattained, sounds like failure; but in earlier years, the budding consciousness of our ability to reach the goal does but stimulate us, and never chills our efforts by the dread of disappointment. We have, as it were, only bound ourselves in recognizances with our own hearts—the world has not gone bail for us, and our falling short involves not the ruin of others, nor the loss of that self respect which is but the reflex of the opinion of society. I felt this strongly; and the more I ruminated on it, the more resolutely bent was I to adopt some bold career—some enterprising path, where ambition should supply to me the pleasures and excitements that others found among friends and home.

I now perceived how unsuitable would be to me the quiet monotony of a peasant's life—how irksome the recurrence of the same daily occupations, the routine of ceaseless labour, the intercourse with those whose views and hopes strayed not beyond their own hedge-rows. A soldier's life appeared to realize all that I looked for; but then, the conversation of the piper recurred to me, and I remembered how he painted these men to me as mere hireling bravos, to whom glory or fame were nothing, merely actuated by the basest passions, the slaves of tyranny. All the atrocities he mentioned of the military in the past year came up before me, and with them the brave resistance of the people in their struggle for independence. How my heart glowed with enthusiasm as I thought over the bold stand they had made, and how I panted to be a man, and linked in such a cause. Every gloomy circumstance in my own fate seemed as the result of that grinding oppression under which my country suffered, even to the curse vented on me by one whose ruin and desolation lay at my own father's door. My temples throbbed, and my heart beat painfully against my side, as

I revolved these thoughts within me; and when I rose from my bed that morning I was a rebel with all my soul.

The day, like the preceding one, was stormy and inclement. The rain poured down without ceasing, and the dark, louring sky gave no promise of better things. The household of the cottage remained all at home, and betook themselves to such occupations as indoor permitted. The women sat down to their spinning-wheels—some of the men employed themselves in repairing their tools, and others in making nets for fishing; but all were engaged. Meanwhile, amid the sounds of labour were mixed the busy hum of merry voices, as they chatted away pleasantly, with many a story and many a song lightening the long hours of the dark day. As for me, I longed impatiently for Darby's return—a thousand half-formed plans were flitting through my mind, and I burned to hear whether Basset was still in pursuit of me—what course he was adopting to regain me within his control—if Darby had seen my friend Bubbleton, and whether he showed any disposition to befriend and protect me. These and such like thoughts kept passing through my mind; and as the storm would shake the rude door, I would stand up with eagerness, hoping every moment to see him enter. But the day moved on, and the dusky half-light of a wintry afternoon was falling, and Darby made not his appearance. When I spoke of him to the others, they expressed no surprise at his absence, merely remarking that he was always uncertain—no one knew when to expect him—that he rarely came when they looked for him, and constantly dropped in when no one anticipated it.

"There he is now, then," said one of the young men, springing up and opening the door—"I hear his voice in the glen."

"Do you see him, Maurice?" cried Malone. "Is it him?"

The young man stepped back, his face pale as death, and his mouth partly open. He whispered a word in the old man's ear, to which the other responded—

"Where?" The youth pointed with his finger. "How many are they?" was his next question, while his dark eye glanced towards the old musket that hung on the wall above the fire.

"Too many, too many for us," said Maurice, bitterly.

The women, who had gathered around the speaker, looked at each other with an expression of utter wretchedness, when one of them, breaking from the others, rushed into the little inner room off the kitchen, and slammed the door violently behind her. The next instant the sound of voices was heard from the room, as if in altercation. Malone turned round at once, and, throwing the door wide open, called out—

"Be quiet, I say. There's not a moment to be lost. Maurice, put that gun away—Shamus, take up your net again—sit down, girls."

At the same instant he drew from his bosom a long horse pistol, and, having examined the loading and priming, replaced it within his waistcoat, and sat down on a chair beside the fire, his strongly-marked countenance fixed on the red blaze, while his lips muttered rapidly some words to himself.

"Are ye ready there?" he cried, as his eyes were turned towards the small door.

"In a minit," said the woman from within.

At the same instant the sounds of voices and the regular tramp of men marching were heard without.

"Halt! stand at ease," called out a deep voice, and the clank of the muskets as they fell to the ground was heard through the cabin. Meanwhile, every one within had resumed his previous place and occupation, and the buz of voices resounded through the kitchen, as though no interruption whatever had taken place. The latch was now lifted, and a sergeant, stooping to permit his tall feather to pass in, entered, followed by a man in plain clothes.

The latter was a short, powerfully-built man, of about fifty; his hair of a grizzly grey, contrasted with the deep purple of his countenance, which was swollen and bloated—the mouth, its most remarkable feature, was large and thick-lipped—the under lip projecting considerably forward, and having a strange, convulsive motion when he was not speaking.

"It's a hard day, Mister Barton," said Malone, rising from his seat, and stroking down his hair with one hand. "Won't ye come over and take an air of the fire?"

"I will, indeed, Ned," said he, taking the proffered seat, and stretching out his legs to the blaze. "It's a severe season we have. I don't know how the poor are to get in the turf; the bogs are very wet entirely."

"They are, indeed, sir; and the harvest 'ill be very late getting in now," said one of the young men, with a most obsequious voice. "Won't ye sit down, sir?" said he to the sergeant.

A nod from Mister Barton in acquiescence decided the matter, and the sergeant was seated.

"What's here, Mary?" said Barton, striking the large pot that hung over the fire with his foot.

"It's the boys' dinner, sir," said the girl.

"I think it wouldn't be a bad job if we joined them," replied he, laughingly—eh, sergeant?"

"There'ill be enough for us all," said Malone—"and I'm sure ye're welcome to it."

The table was quickly spread, the places next the fire being reserved for the strangers; while Malone, unlocking a cupboard, took down a bottle of whiskey, which he placed before them, remarking, as he did so—

"Don't be afeard, gentlemen—'tis parliament."

"That's right, Malone. I like a man to be loyal in these bad times; there's nothing like it. Faith, Mary, you're a good cook—that's as savoury a stew as ever I tasted. Where's Patsey now? I haven't seen him for some time."

The girl's face grew dark-red, and then became suddenly as pale; when, staggering back, she lifted her apron to her face, and leaned against the dresser.

"He's transported for life," said Malone, in a deep sepulchral voice, while all his efforts to conceal agitation were fruitless.

"Oh, I remember," said Barton, carelessly—"he was in the dock

with the Hogans——I'll take another bone from you Ned——Sergeant, that's a real Irish dish, and no bad one either."

"What's doing at the town to-day?" said Malone, affecting an air of easy indifference.

"Nothing remarkable I believe; they have taken up that rascal, Darby the Blast, as they call him. The major had him under examination this morning for two hours; and they say, he'll give evidence against the Dillons——a little more fat if ye please——money, you know, Ned, will do any thing these times."

"You ought to know that, sir," said Maurice, with such an air of assumed innocence, as actually made Barton look ashamed. In an instant, however, he recovered himself, and pretended to laugh at the remark. "Your health, sergeant—Ned Malone, your health—ladies, yours, and boys the same." A shower of "thank ye, sir's," followed this piece of unlooked-for courtesy. "Who's that boy there, Ned?" said he pointing to me, as I sat with my eyes rivetted upon him.

"He's from this side of Banagher, sir," said Malone, evading the question."

"Come over here, younker. What's his name?"

"Tom," sir.

"Come over, Tom, till I teach you a toast. Here's a glass, my lad—hold it steady, till I fill you a bumper. Did you ever hear tell of the croppies?"

"No, never."

"Never heard of the croppies! well you're not long in Ned Malone's company any how—eh? ha! ha! ha! Well, my man, the croppies is another name for the rebels, and the toast I'm going to give you is about them. So mind you finish it at one pull—here now, are you ready?"

"Yes, quite ready," said I, as I held the brimming glass straight before me.

"Here's it then:

'May every croppy taste the rope,
And find some man to bang them;
May Bagnal Harvey and the pope
Have Heppenstal to hang them.'"

I knew enough of the meaning of his words to catch the allusion, and dashing the glass with all my force against the wall, I smashed it in a hundred pieces. Barton sprang from his chair, his face dark with passion, clutching me by the collar with both hands he cried out, "Holloa there without, bring in the handcuffs here. As sure as my name's Sandy Barton, we'll teach you that toast practically, and that ere long."

"Take care what you do there," said Malone fiercely; "that young gentleman is a son of Matthew Burke of Cremore; his relatives are not the kind of people figure in your riding-house."

"Are you a son of Matthew Burke?"

"I am."

"What brings you here then?—why are you not at home?"

"By what right do you dare to ask me? I have yet to learn how far I am responsible for where I go, to a thief-catcher."

"You hear that, sergeant, you heard him use a word to bring me into contempt before the people, and excite them to use acts of violence towards me."

"No such thing, Mister Barton," said Malone coolly; "nobody here has any thought of molesting you. I told you that young gentleman's name and condition, to prevent you making any mistake concerning him; for his friends are not the people to trifle with."

This artfully-put menace had its effect; Barton sat down again, and appeared to reflect for a few minutes, then taking a roll of paper from his pocket, he began leisurely to peruse it—the silence at this moment was something horribly oppressive.

"This is a search-warrant, Mr. Malone," said Barton, laying down the paper on the table, "empowering me to seek for the body of a certain French officer, said to be concealed in these parts. Informations on oath state that he passed, at least, one night under your roof. As he has not accepted the amnesty granted to the other officers in the late famous attempt against the peace of this country, the law will deal with him as strict justice may demand; at the same time, it is right you should know that harbouring or sheltering him, under these circumstances, involves the person or persons so doing in his guilt. Mr. Malone's well-known and tried loyalty," continued Barton, with a half grin of most malicious meaning, "would certainly exculpate him from any suspicion of this nature; but sworn informations are stubborn things, and it is possible that, in ignorance of the danger such a proceeding would involve——'

"I thought the thrubbles was over, sir," interrupted Malone, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand, "and that an honest, industrious man, that minded his own business, had nothing to fear from any one."

"And you thought right," said Barton, slowly and deliberately, while he scanned the other's features with a searching look; "and that is the very fact I'm come to ascertain; and now, with your leave, we'll first search the house and offices; and then I'll put a little interrogatory to such persons as I think fit, touching this affair."

"You're welcome to go over the cabin whenever you like," said Malone, rising, and evidently labouring to repress his passionate indignation at Barton's coolness.

Barton stood up at the same moment, and giving a wink at the sergeant to follow, walked towards the small door I've already mentioned. Malone's wife at this started forward, and, catching Barton's arm, whispered a few words in his ear.

"She must be a very old woman by this time," said Barton, fixing his sharp eyes on the speaker.

"Upwards of ninety, sir, and bed-ridden for twelve years," said the woman, wiping a tear away with her apron.

"And how comes it she's so afraid of the soldiers, if she's doating?"

"Arrah, they used to frighten her so much, coming in at night, and firing shots at the doore, and drinking, and singing songs, that she never got over it, and that's the rayson. I'll beg of your honour not to bring in the sergeant, and to disturb her only as little as you can, for it sets her raving about battles and murders, and it's maybe ten days before we'll get her mind at ease again."

"Well, well, I'll not trouble her," said he quickly. "Sergeant, step back for a moment."

With this he entered the room, followed by the woman, whose uncertain step and quiet gesture seemed to suggest caution.

"She's asleep, sir," said she, approaching the bed. "It's many a day since she had as fine a sleep as that. 'Tis good luck you brought us this morning, Mister Barton."

"Draw aside the curtain a little," said Barton in a low voice, as if fearing to awake the sleeper.

"'Tis rousing her up, you'll be, Mister Barton. She feels the light at wanst."

"She breathes very long for so old a woman," said he somewhat louder, "and has a good broad shoulder too. I'd like if it was only for curiosity just to see her face a little closer.——I thought so.——Come, captain, it's no use——"

A scream from the woman drowned the remainder of the speech, while at the same instant one of the young men shut to the outside door, and barred it. The sergeant was immediately pinioned with his hands behind his back, and Malone drew his horse pistol from his bosom, and holding up his hand, called out—

"Not a word—not a word. If ye spake, it will be the last time ever you'll do so," said he to the sergeant.

At the same moment the noise of a scuffle was heard in the inner room, and the door burst suddenly open, and Barton issued forth, dragging in his strong hands the figure of a young, slightly-formed man. His coat was off, but his trowsers were braided with gold, in military fashion; and his black moustache denoted the officer. The struggle of the youth to get free was utterly fruitless—Barton's grasp was on his collar, and he held him as though he were a child.

Malone stooped down towards the fire, and opening the pan of his pistol, examined the priming; then slapping it down again he stood erect.

"Barton," said he, in a tone of firm determination I heard him use for the first time—"Barton, it's bad to provoke a man with the halter round his neck. I know what's before me well enough now. But, see, let him escape—give him two hours to get away—and here I'll surrender myself your prisoner, and follow you where you like."

"Break in the door there, blast ye," was the reply to this offer, as Barton shouted to the soldiers at the top of his voice. Two of the young men darted forward as he spoke and threw themselves against it. "Fire through it," cried Barton, stamping with passion.

"You will have it, will you then," said Malone, as he ground his teeth in anger; then raising his pistol he sprang forward, and hold-

ing it within a yard of Barton's face, shouted out, "there." The powder flashed in the lock, and quick as its own report, Barton hurled the Frenchman round to protect him from the ball, but only in time to receive the shot in his right arm as he held it uplifted. The arm fell powerless to his side, while Malone springing on him like a tiger, grasped him in his powerful grip, and they both rolled upon the ground in terrible conflict. The Frenchman stood for an instant like one transfixed, then bursting from the spot dashed through the kitchen to the small room I had slept in. One of the young men followed him. The crash of glass, and the sounds of breaking wood-work were heard among the other noises, and at the same moment the door gave way in front, and the soldiers with fixed bayonets entered at a charge.

"Fire on them! fire on them!" shouted Barton, as he lay struggling on the ground; and a random volley rang through the cabin, filling it with smoke. A yell of anguish burst forth at the moment, and one of the women lay stretched upon the hearth, her bosom bathed in blood. The scene was now a terrible one; for although overpowered by numbers, the young men rushed on the soldiers, and, regardless of wounds, endeavoured to wrest their arms from them. The bayonets glanced through the blue smoke, and shouts of rage and defiance rose up amid frightful screams of suffering and woe. A bayonet stab in the side, received I know not how, sent me half fainting into the little room, through which the Frenchman had escaped. The open window being before me, I did not deliberate a second, but, mounting the table, crept through it, and fell heavily on the turf outside. In a moment after I rallied, and staggering onwards, reached a potato-field, where, overcome by pain and weakness, I sank into one of the furrows, scarcely conscious of what had occurred.

Weak and exhausted as I was, I could still hear the sounds of the conflict that raged within the cabin. Gradually, however, they grew fainter and fainter, and at last subsided altogether. Yet I feared to stir; and although night was now falling, and the silence continued unbroken, I lay still, hoping to hear some well-known voice, or even the footstep of some one belonging to the house; but all was calm, and nothing stirred. The very air, too, was hushed: not a leaf moved in the thin frosty atmosphere. The dread of finding the soldiers in possession of the cabin made me fearful of quitting my hiding-place, and I did not move. Some hours had passed over, ere I gained courage enough to raise my head, and look about me.

My first glance was directed towards the distant high-road, where I expected to have seen some of the party who attacked the cabin; but far as my eye could reach, no living thing was to be seen;—my next was towards the cabin, which, to my horror and amazement, I soon perceived was enveloped in a thick, dark smoke, that rolled lazily from the windows and doorway, and even issued from the thatched roof. As I looked, I could hear the crackling of timber and the sound of wood burning. These continued to increase; and then a red forked flame shot through one of the casements, and, turning upwards, caught the thatch, where, passing rapidly across the entire roof, it burst into a

broad sheet of fire, which died out again as rapidly, and left the gloomy smoke triumphant.

Meanwhile a roaring sound, like that of a furnace, was heard from within; and at last, with an explosion like a mortar, the roof burst open, and the bright blaze sprung forth; the rafters were soon enveloped in fire, and the heated straw rose into the air, and floated in thin streaks of flame through the black sky. The door-cases and the window-frames were all burning, and marked their outlines against the dark walls; and as the thatch was consumed, the red rafters were seen like the ribs of a skeleton, but they fell in one by one, sending up in their descent millions of red sparks into the dark air. The back wall of the cabin had given way to the heat, and through its wide fissure I could see the interior, now one mass of undistinguishable ruin; nothing remained, save the charred and blackened walls.

I sat gazing at this sad sight like one entranced: sometimes it seemed to me as a terrible dream; and then the truth would break upon me with fearful force, and my heart felt as though it would burst far beyond my bosom. The last flickering flame died away; the hissing sounds of the fire were stilled; and the dark walls stood out against the bleak back-ground in all their horrible deformity, as I rose and entered the cabin. I stood within the little room where I had slept the night before, and looked out into the kitchen, around whose happy hearth the merry voices were so lately heard. I brought them up before me, in imagination, as they sat there. One by one I marked their places in my mind, and thought of the kindness of their welcome to me, and the words of comfort and encouragement they spoke. The hearth was now cold and black; the pale stars looked down between the walls, and a chill moonlight flickered through the gloomy ruin. My heart had no room for sorrow, but another feeling found a place within it—a savage thirst for vengeance—vengeance upon those who had desecrated a peaceful home, and brought blood and death among its inmates! Here was the very realization before my eyes of what M'Keown had been telling me; here the horrible picture he had drawn of tyranny and outrage. In these humble cottagers I saw but simple-minded peasants, who had opened their doors to some poor unfriended outcast—one who, like myself, had neither house nor home: I saw them offering their hospitality to him who sought it, freely and openly; and at last, adventuring all they possessed in the world, rather than betray him—and their reward was this. Oh, how my heart revolted at such oppression; how my spirit fired at such indignity; I thought a life passed in opposition to such tyranny were too short a vengeance, and I knelt me down beside that blackened hearth, and swore myself its enemy to the death,

CHAPTER VI.

MY EDUCATION.

As I thought over the various incidents the last few days of my life had presented, I began to wonder with myself whether the world always went on thus; and if the same scenes of misery and woe I had witnessed were in the ordinary course of nature. The work of years seemed to me to have been accomplished in a few brief hours. Here, where I stood, but yesterday, a happy family were met together; and now, death and misfortune had laid waste the spot; and, save the cold walls, nothing marked it as a human habitation. What had become of them? Where had they gone to? Had they fled from the blood-stained hands of the cruel soldiery, or were they led away to prison? These were the questions constantly recurring to my mind: and the French officer, too—what of him? I felt the deepest interest in his fate. Poor fellow! he looked so pale and sickly; and yet there was something both bold and manly in his flashing eye and compressed lip. He was doubtless one of those Darby alluded to. What a lot was his; and how little did my own sorrows seem, as I compared them with his houseless, friendless condition! As my thoughts thus wandered on, a dark shadow fell across the gleam of moonlight that lit up the ruined cabin. I turned suddenly, and saw the figure of a man leaning against the door-post. For a second or two fear was uppermost in my mind, but rallying soon, I called out—"Who's there?"

"'Tis me, Darby M'Keown," said a well-known voice, but in a tone of deepest sorrow: "I came over to have a look at the ould walls once more."

"You heard it all, then, Darby?"

"Yes: they wor bringing the prisoners into Athlone as I left the town; and I thought to myself you'd maybe be hiding somewhere hereabouts. Is the captain away—is he safe?"

"The French officer—yes—he escaped early in the business. I know he must be far off by this time. Heaven knows which way though."

"Maybe I could guess," said Darby, quietly. "Well, well, it's hard to know what's best. Sometimes it would seem the will of God that we aren't to succeed; and, if we hadn't right on our side, it would not be easy to bear up against such misfortunes as these."

There was a silence on both sides after these words, during which I pondered them well in my mind.

"Come, Master Tom," said Darby, suddenly; "'tis time we were moving. You're not safe here no more nor others. Basset is looking for you everywhere, and you'll have to leave the neighbourhood for a

while, at least. Your friend, the captain, too, is gone; his regiment marched yesterday; so now make up your mind what to do."

"That's easily done, Darby," said I, attempting to seem at ease; "whichever is your road shall be mine, if you let me."

"Let you—yes, with a hearty welcome, too, my darling; but the first thing is to get you some clothes that won't discover on you. Here's a hat I squeezed into my own that 'ill just fit you, and I've a coat here that's about your size—that's enough for the present, and as we go along I'll teach you your part, how you are to behave, and he'll be no fool that 'ill find you out after ten days or a fortnight."

My change of costume was soon effected, and my wound, which turned out to be a trifling one, looked after; I took a farewell look at the old walls, and stepped after my companion down the boreen.

"If we make haste," said Darby, "we'll be beyond Shannon harbour before day; and then, when we're on the canal, we'll easy get a lift in some of the boats going to Dublin."

"And are you for Dublin?" inquired I, eagerly.

"Yes: I'm to be there on the twenty-fourth of this month, please God. There's a meeting of the friends of Ireland to be then, and some resolutions will be taken about what's to be done. There's bad work going on in the parliament."

"Indeed, Darby! what is it?"

"Oh! you couldn't understand it well: but it's just as if we warn't to have any thing to say to governing ourselves, only be made slaves of, and sent abroad to fight for the English, that always hate us and abuse us."

"And are we going to bear with this?" cried I, passionately.

"No," said Darby, laying his hand on my shoulder—"no, not at least if we had twenty thousand like you, my brave boy. But you'll hear every thing yourself soon; and now, let me attend to your education a bit, for we're not out of the enemy's country."

Darby now commenced his code of instruction to me, by which I learned that I was to perform a species of second to him in all minstrelsy—not exactly on the truest principles of harmony, but merely alternating with him in the verses of his songs. These, which were entirely of his own composition, were all to be learned, and orally, too, for Mister M'Keown was too jealous of his copyright ever to commit them to writing, and especially charged me never to repeat any lyric in the same neighbourhood.

"It's not only the robbery I care for," quoth Darby, "but the varmint destroys my poethry completely—sometimes changing the words, injuring the sentiments, and even altering the tune. Now, it's only last Tuesday I heerd 'Behave politely' to the tune of 'Look how he sarved me.'"

Besides the musical portion of my education, there was another scarcely less difficult to be attended to: this was, the skilful adaptation of our melodies not only to the prevailing tastes of the company, but to their political and party bearings—Darby supplying me with various

hints how I was to discover at a moment the peculiar bias of any stranger's politics.

"The boys," said Darby, thereby meaning his own party, "does be always sly and careful, and begin by asking, maybe, for 'Do you incline?' or 'Crows in the barley,' or the like. Then they'll say, 'Have you any thing new, Mister M'Keown, from up the counthry?' 'Something sweet, is it?' says I. 'Ay, or sour, av ye have it,' they'll say. 'Maybe ye'd like Vinegar-hill, then,' says I. Arrah, you'd see their faces redden up with delight, and how they'll beat time to every stroke of the tune—it's a pleasure to play for them. But the yeos (meaning the yeomen) will call out mightily—'Piper—holloa there, piper, I say—rise the Boyne Water, or Croppies lie down.'"

"And, of course, you refuse, Darby?"

"Refuse—refuse, is it—and get a bayonet in me? Devil a bit, my dear. I'll play it up with all the spirit I can; and nod my head to the tune, and beat the time with my heel and toe; and, maybe, if I see need of it, I fasten this to the end of the chaunter, and that does the business entirely."

Here Darby took from the lining of his hat a bunch of orange ribbon, whose faded glories showed it had done long and active service in the cause of loyalty.

I confess Darby's influence over me did not gain any accession of power by this honest avowal of his political expediency; and the bold assertion of a nation's wrongs, by which, at first, he won over my enthusiasm, seemed sadly at variance with this truckling policy. He was quick-sighted enough to perceive what was passing in my mind, and at once remarked—

"'Tis a hard part we're obliged to play, Master Tom, but one comfort we have—it's only a short time we'll need it. You know the song."

Here he broke into the popular tune of the day:—

"And the French will come again,
Says the Shan van vaugh,
And they'll bring ten thousand men,
Says the Shan van vaugh,
And, with powder and with ball,
For our rights we'll loudly call;
Don't you think they'll hear us then?
Says the Shan van vaugh.

"Ye must larn that air, Master Tom; and see, now, the yeos is as fond of it as the boys, only remember to put their own words to it; and devil a harm in that same, when one's not in earnest. See, now, I believe it's a natural pleasure for an Irishman to be humbugging somebody; and, faix, when there's nobody by, he'd rather be taking a rise out of himself than doing nothing. It's the way that's in us, God help us! Sure it's that same makes us sich favourites with the ladies, and gives us a kind of native ganius for coortin'—

"'Tis the look of his eye
And a way he can sigh
Makes Paddy a darlin' wherever he goes;
With a sugary brogue,
Ye'd hear the rogue
Cheat the girls before their nose.

"And why not?—Don't they like to be chated, when they're sure to win after all?—to win a warm heart and a stout arm to fight for them."

This species of logic I give, as a specimen of Mister M'Keown's power of—if not explaining away a difficulty—at least, getting out of all reach of it—an attribute almost as Irish as the cause it was employed to defend.

As we journeyed along, Darby maintained a strict reserve as to the event which had required his presence in Athlone, nor did he allude to the major but passingly, observing that—

"He didn't know how it happened that a Dublin magistrate should have come up to these parts, though, to be sure, he's a great friend of the Right Honourable."

"And who is he?" asked I.

"The Right Honourable! Don't you know, then? Why, I didn't think there was a child in the county couldn't tell that. Sure, it's Denis Browne himself."

The name seemed at once to suggest a whole flood of recollections, and Darby expatiated for hours long on the terrible power of a man, in whose hands life and death were distributed, without any aid from judge or jury—thus opening to me another chapter of the lawless tyranny to which he was directing my attention, and by which he already saw my mind was greatly influenced.

About an hour after daybreak we arrived at a small cabin, which served as a lock-house on the canal side. It needed not the cold, murky sky, nor the ceaseless pattering of the rain, to make this place look more comfortless and miserable than any thing I had ever beheld. Around, for miles in extent, the country was one unbroken flat, without any trace of wood, or even a single thorn hedge, to relieve the eye. Low, marshy meadows, where the rank flaggers and reedy grass grew tall and luxuriant, with here and there some stray patches of tillage, were girt round by vast plains of bog, cut up into every variety of trench and pit. The cabin itself, though slated and built of stone, was in bad repair, the roof broken in many places, and the window mended with pieces of board, and even straw. As we came close, Darby remarked that there was no smoke from the chimney, and that the door was fastened on the outside.

"That looks bad," said he, as he stopped short about a dozen paces from the hovel, and looked steadily at it; "they've taken him too."

"Who is it, Darby?" said I. "What did he do?"

M'Keown paid no attention to my question, but unfastening the hasp which attached the door, without any padlock, entered. The fire was yet alive on the hearth, and a small stool, drawn close to it, showed

where some one had been sitting: there was nothing unusual in the appearance of the cabin; the same humble furniture and cooking utensils lying about, as were seen in any other. Darby, however, scrutinized every thing most carefully; looking everywhere, and into every thing, till, at last, reaching his hand above the door, he pulled out, from the straw of the thatch, a small piece of dirty and crumpled paper, which he opened with the greatest care and attention; and then flattening it out with his hand, began to read it over to himself, his eye flashing, and his cheek growing redder, as he pored over it. At last he broke silence with—

"'Tis myself never doubted ye, Tim, my boy. Look at that, Master Tom—but sure you wouldn't understand it, after all. The yeos took him up last night. 'Tis something about cutting the canal, and attacking the boat, that's again him; and he left that there—that bit of paper, to give the boys courage that he wouldn't betray them. That's the way the cause will prosper—if we'll only stick by each other. For many a time, when they take a man up, they spread it about that he's turned informer against the rest, and then the others gets careless, and don't mind whether they're taken or not."

Darby replaced the piece of paper carefully, and then, listening for a moment, exclaimed—

"I hear the boat coming; let's wait for it outside."

While he employed himself in getting his pipes into readiness, I could not help ruminating on the strength of loyalty to each other the poor people observed amid every temptation and every seduction—how, in the midst of such misery as theirs, neither threats nor bribery seemed to influence them, was a strong testimony in favour of their truth, and to such a reasoner as I was, a no less cogent argument for the goodness of the cause that elicited such virtues.

As the boat came alongside, I remarked that the deck was without a passenger; heaps of trunks and luggage littered it the entire way; but the severity of the weather had driven every one under cover, except the steersman and the captain, who, both of them wrapped up in thick coats of frize, seemed like huge bears standing on their hind quarters.

"How are you, Darby?" shouted the skipper; "call out that lazy rascal to open the lock."

"I don't think he's at home, sir," said Darby, as innocently as though he knew nothing of the reason for his absence.

"Not at home!—the scoundrel, where can he be, then? Come, youngster," cried he, addressing me, "take the key there, and open the lock."

Until this moment, I forgot the character which my dress and appearance assigned to me; but a look from the piper recalled me at once to recollection; and, taking up the iron key, I proceeded, under Darby's instructions, to do what I was desired, while Darby and the captain amused themselves by wondering what had become of Tim, and speculated on the immediate consequences his absence would bring down on him.

"Are you going with us, Darby?" said the captain

"Faix, I don't know, sir," said he, as if hesitating; "av there was any gentleman that liked the pipes——"

"Yes, yes, come along, man," rejoined the skipper: "is the boy with you?—very well—come in, youngster."

We were soon under weigh again; and Darby, having arranged his instrument to his satisfaction, commenced a very spirited voluntary to announce his arrival. In an instant the cabin-door opened, and a red-faced, coarse-looking fellow, in uniform, called out—

"Holloa, there—is that a piper?"

"Yes, sir," said Darby, without turning his face round, while, at the same time, he put a question, in Irish, to the skipper, who answered it with a single word.

"I say, piper, come down here," cried the yeoman, for such he was; "come down here, and let's have a tune."

"I'm coming, sir," cried Darby, standing up; and holding out his hand to me, he called out, "Tom, alannah, lead me down stairs."

I looked up in his face, and, to my amazement, perceived that he had turned up the white of his eyes, to represent blindness, and was groping with his hand, like one deprived of sight.

As any hesitation on my part might have betrayed him at once, I took his hand, and led him along, step by step, to the cabin door. I had barely time to perceive that all the passengers were habited in uniform, when one of them called out—

"We don't want the young fellow; let him go back. Piper, sit down here."

The motion for my exclusion was passed without a negative, and I closed the door, and sat down by myself among the trunks on deck.

For the remainder of the day I saw nothing of Darby: the shouts of laughter and clapping of hands, below stairs, occasionally informing me how successful were his efforts to amuse his company; while I had abundant time to think over my own plans, and make some resolutions for the future.

CHAPTER VII.

KEVIN-STREET.

How this long, melancholy day wore on I cannot say; to me it was as gloomy in reverie as in its own dismal aspect: the very sounds of mirth that issued from the cabin beneath grated harshly on my ear; and the merry strains of Darby's pipes and the clear notes of his rich voice seemed like treachery from one, who so lately had spoken in terms of heart-breathing emotion of his countrymen and their wrongs. While therefore my estimation for my companion suffered, my sorrow for the cause that demanded such sacrifices deepened at every moment, and I panted with eagerness for the moment when I might take my place among the bold defenders of my country, and openly dare our oppressors to the battle. All that M'Keown had told me of English tyranny and oppression was connected in my mind with the dreadful scene I had so lately been a witness to, and for the cause of which I looked no further than an act of simple hospitality. From this I wandered on to the thought of those brave allies who had deserted their career of continental glory to share our almost hopeless fortunes here; and how I burned to know them, and learn from them something of a soldier's ardour.

Night had fallen, when the fitful flashing of lamps between the tall elms that lined the banks announced our approach to the capital. There is something dreadfully depressing in the aspect of a large city to the poor unfriended youth, who, without house or home, is starting upon his life's journey: the stir—the movement—the onward tide of population, intent on pleasure or business, are things in which he has no part. The appearance of wealth humiliates, while the sight of poverty affrights him; and while every one is animated by some purpose, he alone seems like a waif thrown on the shores of life, unclaimed—unlooked for. Thus did I feel among that busy crowd who now pressed to the deck, gathering together their luggage, and preparing for departure. Some home awaited each of these; some hearth, some happy faces to greet their coming; but I had none of these. This was a sorrowful thought; and as I brooded over it, my head sank upon my knees, and I saw nothing of what was going forward about me

"Tom," whispered a low voice in my ear—"Master Tom, don't delay, my dear: let us slip out here. The soldiers want me to go with them to their billets; and I have promised—but I mean not to do it."

I looked up. It was Darby, buttoned up in his coat, his pipes unfastened for the convenience of carriage.

"Slip out after me at the lock here. It's so dark, we'll never be seen."

Keeping my eye on him, I elbowed my way through the crowded deck, and sprang out just as the boat began her forward movement.

"Here we are all safe," said Darby, patting me on the shoulder; "and now that I've time to ask you, did you get your dinner, my child?"

"Oh, yes; the captain brought me something to eat."

"Come, that's right anyhow! Glory be to God! I ate heartily of some bacon and greens, though the blackguards—bad luck to them for the same—made me eat an orange lily whole, afraid the *greens*, as they said, might injure me."

"I wonder, Darby," said I, "that you haven't more firmness than to change this way at every moment?"

"Firmness, is it? Faith it's firm enough I'd be, and stiff too, if I didn't——sure it's the only way now at all. Wait, my honey, till the time comes round for ourselves, and faith you'll never accuse me of coorting their favour; but now—at this moment, you perceive—we must do it to learn their plans. What do you think I got to-night? I learned all the signs the yeos have when they're drinking together, and what they say at each sign. There's a way they have of gripping the two little fingers together—that I'll not forget soon."

For some time we walked on at a rapid pace, without exchanging more than an occasional word. At last we entered a narrow, ill-lighted street, which led from the canal harbour to one of the larger and wider thoroughfares.

"I almost forget the way here," said Darby, stopping and looking about him. At last, unable to solve the difficulty, he leaned over the half-door of a shop, and called out to a man within—"Can you tell where is Kevin-street?"

"No. 39?" says the man, after looking at him steadily for a moment.

Darby stroked down one side of his face with his hand slowly, a gesture immediately imitated by the other man.

"What do you know?" said Darby.

"I know 'U,'" replied the man.

"And what more?"

"I know 'N.'"

"That 'ill do," said Darby, shaking hands with him cordially. "Now, tell me the way: for I have no time to spare."

"Begorra, you're in as great haste as if ye were Darby the Blast himself. Ye'll come in and take a glass."

Darby only laughed; and again excusing himself, he asked the way, which having learned, he wished his newly-made friend good night, and we proceeded.

"They know you well hereabouts, by name at least," said I, when we had walked on a little.

"That they do," said Darby proudly. "From Wexford to Belfast, there's few doesn't know me; and they'll know more of me, av I'm right, before I die."

This he spoke with more of determination than I ever heard him use previously.

"Here's the street now: there's the lamp—that one with the two burners there. Faix, we've made good track since morning, anyhow."

As he spoke, we entered a narrow passage, through which the street-lamp threw a dubious half light. This conducted us to a small paved court, crossing which we arrived at the door of a large house, which appeared in total darkness. Darby knocked in a peculiar manner, and the door was speedily opened by a man, who whispered something, to which M'Keown made answer in the same low tone.

"I'm glad to see you again," said the man louder, as he made way for him to pass.

I pushed forward to follow, when suddenly a strong arm was stretched across my breast, and a gruff voice asked—

"Who are you?"

Darby stepped back and said something in his ear: the other replied sturdily in the negative; and although Darby, as it appeared, used every power of persuasion he possessed, the man was inexorable. At last, when the temper of both appeared nearly giving way, Darby turned to me, and said—

"Wait for me a moment, Tom, where you are, and I'll come for you."

So saying, he disappeared, and the door closed at the same time, leaving me in darkness on the outside. My patience was not severely taxed—ere five minutes the door opened, and Darby, followed by another person, appeared.

"Mr. Burke," said this latter, with the tone of voice that at once bespoke a gentleman, "I am proud to know you." He grasped my hand warmly as he spoke, and shook it affectionately. "I esteem it an honour to be your sponsor here. Can you find your way after me? This place is never lighted—but I trust you'll know it better ere long."

Muttering some words of acknowledgment, I followed my unseen acquaintance along the dark corridor.

"There's a step here," cried he, "and now mind the stairs."

A long and winding flight conducted us to a landing where a candle was burning in a tin sconce. Here my conductor turned round.

"Your Christian name is Thomas, I believe," said he; at the same moment, as the light fell on me, he started suddenly back with an air of mingled astonishment and chagrin. "Why, M'Keown, you told me——." The rest of the sentence was lost in a whisper.

"It's a disguise I made him wear," said Darby; "he'd no chance of escaping the country without it."

"I'm not speaking of that," retorted the other angrily. "It is his age, I mean—he's only a boy. How old are you, sir?" continued he, addressing me, but with far less courtesy than before.

"Old enough to live for my country, or die for it either, if need be," said I haughtily.

"Bravo, my darling," cried the piper, slapping me on the shoulder with enthusiasm.

"That's not exactly my question," said the stranger, smiling good naturedly; "I want to know your age."

"I was fourteen in August," said I.

"I had rather you could say twenty," responded he thoughtfully. "This is a sad mistake of yours, Darby. What dependance can be placed on a child like this?—he's only a child after all."

"He's a child I'll go bail for with my head," said Darby.

"Your head has fully as much on it, as it is fit to carry," said the other in a tone of rebuke. "Have you told him any thing of the object and intentions of this society? But of course you have revealed every thing. Well, I'll not be a party to this business. Young gentleman," continued he, in a voice of earnest and impressive accent, "all I know of you is the few particulars this man has stated respecting your unfriended position, and the cruelty to which you fear to expose yourself in trusting to the guardianship of Mr. Basset. If these reasons have induced you, from recklessness and indifference, to risk your life, by association with men who are actuated by high and noble principles, then I say, you shall not enter here. If however, aware of the object and intentions of our union, you are desirous to aid us, young though you be, I shall not refuse you."

"That's it," interrupted Darby—"if you feel in your heart a friend to your country——"

"Silence," said the other harshly; "let him decide for himself."

"I neither know your intentions, nor even guess at them," said I, frankly. "My destitution and the poor prospect before me, make me, as you suppose, indifferent to what I embark in, provided that it be not dishonourable. It is not danger will deter me, that's all I can promise you."

"I see," said the stranger, "this is but another of your pranks, M'Keown. The young gentleman was to be kidnapped amongst us. One thing," said he, turning to me, "I feel assured of, that any thing you have witnessed here is safe within your keeping, and now, we'll not press the matter further; in a few days you can hear, and make up your mind on all these things, and as you are not otherwise provided, let us make you our guest in the meanwhile."

Without giving me time to reply, he led me down stairs again, and, unlocking a door on the second floor, passed through several rooms until he reached one comfortably fitted up like a study.

"You must be satisfied with a sofa here for to-night, but to-morrow I will make you more comfortable."

I threw my eyes over the well-filled book-shelf with delight, and was preparing to thank him for all his kindness to me, when he added—

"I must leave you now, but we'll meet to-morrow; so good night. "Come along, M'Keown, we shall want you presently."

I would gladly have detained Darby to interrogate him about my new abode and its inhabitants, but he was obliged to obey, and I heard

the door locked, as they closed it, on the outside; and shortly after, the sounds of their feet died away, and I was left in silence.

Determined to con over, and, if possible, explain to myself the mystery of my position, I drew my sofa towards the fire and sat down, but fatigue, stronger than all my curiosity, had the mastery, and I was soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO. 39, AND ITS FREQUENTERS.

When my eyes opened the following morning, it was quite pardonable in me if I believed I was still dreaming. The room, which I had scarcely time to look at the previous evening, now appeared handsomely, almost richly furnished. Books in handsome bindings covered the shelves, prints in gilded frames occupied the walls, and a large mirror filled the space above the chimney. Various little articles of taste, in bronze and marble, were scattered about; and a silver tea equipage, of antique pattern, graced a small table near the fire. A pair of splendidly-mounted pistols hung at one side of the chimney-glass, and a gorgeously-gilt sabre occupied the other.

While I took a patient survey of all these, and was deliberately examining myself as to how and when I had first made their acquaintance, a voice from an adjoining room, the door of which lay open, exclaimed—

"*Sacristi! quel mauvais temps!*" and then broke out into a little French air, to which, after a minute, the singer appeared to move, in a kind of dancing measure. "*Oui c'est-cà!*" exclaimed he in rapture, as he whirled round in a pirouette, overturning a dressing-table and its contents with a tremendous crash upon the floor.

I started up, and, without thinking of what I was doing, rushed in.

"*Ha! bon-jour,*" said he gaily, stretching out two fingers of a hand almost concealed beneath a mass of rings; and then suddenly changing to English, which he spoke perfectly, saving with a foreign accent—"How did you sleep? I suppose the *tintamarre* awoke you."

I hastened to apologize for my intrusion, which he stopped at once by asking if I had passed a comfortable night, and had a great appetite for breakfast.

Assuring him of both facts, I retreated into the sitting-room, where he followed me, laughing heartily at his mishap, which he confessed he had not patience to remedy; "and what's worse," added he, "I have no servant. But, some tea and coffee—let us chat while we eat."

I drew over my chair at his invitation, and found myself, before half

an hour went by, acted on by that strange magnetism which certain individuals possess, to detail to my new friend the principal events of my simple story, down to the very moment in which we sat opposite to each other. He listened to me with the greatest attention, occasionally interposing a question, or asking an explanation of something which he did not perfectly comprehend; and when I concluded, he paused for some minutes, and then, with a slight laugh, said—

"You don't know how you disappointed the people here. Your travelling companion had given to understand that you were some other Burke, whose alliance they have been long desiring. In fact, they were certain of it; but," said he, starting up hastily, "it is far better as it is. I suspect, my young friend, the way in which you have been entrapped. Don't fear; we are perfectly safe here. I know all the hacknied declamations about wrongs and slavery that are in vogue, and I know, too, how timidly they shrink from every enterprise by which their cause might be honourably, boldly asserted. I am myself another victim to the assumed patriotism of this party. I came over here two years since to take a command. A command! but in what an army! An undisciplined rabble without arms, without officers, without even clothes—their only notion of warfare a midnight murder, or a reckless and indiscrimate slaughter. The result could not be doubtful—utter defeat and discomfiture. My countrymen, disgusted at the scenes they witnessed, and ashamed of such '*confrerie*,' accepted the amnesty, and returned to France. I——"

Here he hesitated, and blushed slightly; after which he resumed—

"I yielded to a credulity for which there was neither reason nor excuse. I remained: promises were made me—oaths were sworn—statements were produced, to show how complete the organization of the insurgents really was, and to what purpose it might be turned. I drew up a plan of a campaign — corresponded with the different leaders—encouraged the wavering—restrained the headstrong—confirmed the hesitating, and, in fact, for fourteen months, held them together, not only against their opponents, but their own more dangerous disunion; and the end is—what think you?—I only learned it yesterday, on my return from an excursion in the west, which nearly cost me my life. I was concealed in a cabin in woman's clothes——"

"At Malone's, in the Glen?"

"Yes: how did you know that?"

"I was there. I saw you captured, and witnessed your escape."

"*Diantre!* How near it was!"

He paused for a second, and I took the opportunity to recount to him the dreadful issue of the scene, with the burning of the cabin. He grew sickly pale as I related the circumstance; then flushing as quickly, he exclaimed—

"We must look to this; these people must be taken care of. I'll speak to Dalton—you know him?"

"No: I know not one here."

"It was he who met you last night: he is a noble fellow. But stay, there's a knock at the door."

He approached the fire-place, and, taking down the pistols which hung beside it, walked slowly towards the door.

"'Tis Darby, sir—Darby the Blast, coming to speak a word to Mister Burke," said a voice from without.

The door was opened at once, and Darby entered. Making a deep reverence to the French officer, in whose presence he seemed by no means at his ease, Darby dropped his voice to its most humble cadence, and said—

"Might I be so bould as to have a word with ye, Master Tom?"

There was something in the way this request was made, that seemed to imply a desire for secrecy—so, at least, the Frenchman understood it—and turning hastily round, he said—

"Yes, to be sure; I'll go into my dressing-room; there is nothing to prevent you speaking here."

No sooner was the door closed, than Darby drew a chair close to me, and, bending down his head, whispered—

"Don't trust him—not from here to that window: they're going to do it without him—Mahony told me so himself: but my name was not drawn, and I'm to be off to Kildare this evening. There's a meeting of the boys at the Curragh, and I want you to come with me."

The state of doubt and uncertainty which had harassed my mind for the last twenty-four hours was no longer tolerable; so I boldly asked M'Keown for an explanation as to the people in whose house I was—their objects and plans—and how far I was myself involved in their designs.

In fewer words than I could convey it, Darby informed me that the house was the meeting-place of the United Irishmen, who still cherished the hope of reviving the scenes of '98: that—conscious the failure before was attributable to their having taken the field as an army, when they should have merely contented themselves with secret and indirect attacks—they had resolved to adopt a different tactique. It was, in fact, determined that every political opponent to their party should be marked—himself, his family, and his property; that no opportunity was to be lost of injuring him or his; and, if need be, of taking away his life: that various measures were to be propounded to parliament by their friends; to the maintenance of which threats were to be freely used to the government members; and, with respect to the great measure of the day—the Union—it was decided, on the night of the division, a certain number of people should occupy the gallery above the ministerial benches, armed with hand grenades, and other destructive missiles—that, on a signal given, these were to be thrown amongst them, scattering death and ruin on all sides.

"It will be seen, then," said Darby, with a fiendish grin, "how the enemies of Ireland pay for their hatred of her. Maybe they'll vote away their country after that!"

Whether it was the tone, the look, or the words that suddenly awoke me from my dreamy infatuation, I know not; but coming so soon after the Frenchman's detail of the barbarism of the party, a thorough dis-

gust seized me, and the atrocity of this wholesale murder lost nothing of its blackness from being linked with the cause of liberty.

With ready quickness, Darby saw what my impression was, and hastily remarked—

"We'll be all away out of this, Master Tom, you know, before that. We'll be up in Kildare, where we'll see the boys exercising and marching; that's what 'ill do your heart good to look at. But, before we go, you'll have to take the oath; for I'm answerable for you all this time with my own head: not that I care for that same, but others might mistrust ye."

"Holloa!" cried the Frenchman, from within, "I hope you have finished your conference there; for you seem to forget there's no fire in this room."

"Yes, sir; and I beg a thousand pardons," said Darby, servilely: "and Master Tom only wants to bid you good-by before he goes."

"Goes! goes where? are you so soon tired of me?" said he, in an accent of most winning sweetness.

"He's obliged to be at the Curragh, at the meeting there," said Darby, answering for me.

"What meeting? I never heard of it."

"It's a review, sir, of the throops, that's to be by moonlight."

"A review!" said the Frenchman, with a scornful laugh: "and do you call this midnight assembly of marauding savages a review?"

Darby's face grew dark with rage, and for a second, I thought he would have sprung on his assailant, but with a fawning, shrewd smile he lisped out—

"It's what they call it, captain; sure the poor boys knows no better."

"And are you going to this *review?*" said the Frenchman, with an ironical pronunciation of the word.

"I scarce know where to go, or what to do," said I, in a tone of despairing sadness; "any certainty would be preferable to the doubts that harass me."

"Stay with me," said the Frenchman, interrupting me, and laying his hand on my shoulder—"we shall be companions to each other: your friend here knows I can teach you many things that may be useful to you hereafter, and perhaps, with all humility I may say, your stay will be as profitable as at the *camp* yonder."

"I should not like to desert one who has been so kind to me as Darby, and if he wishes——"

Before I could finish my sentence, the door was opened by a key from without, and Dalton, as he was called, stood amongst us.

"What! Darby," said he, in a voice of something like emotion, "not gone yet: you know I forbid you coming up here; I suspected what you would be at. Come lose no more time, we'll take care of Mr. Burke for you."

Darby hung his head sorrowfully and left the room without speaking, followed by Dalton, whose voice I heard in a tone of anger, as he descended the stairs.

There was a certain openness—an easy air of careless freedom in the

young Frenchman, which made me feel at home in his company, almost the very moment of our acquaintance ; and when he asked some questions about myself and my family, I hesitated not to tell him my entire history, with the causes which had first brought me into Darby's society, and led me to imbibe his doctrines and opinions. He paused when I finished, and, after reflecting for some minutes, he looked me gravely in the face, and said—

"But you are aware of the place you are now in?"

"No," said I; "farther than the fact of my having enjoyed a capital night's rest and eaten an excellent breakfast, I know nothing about it."

A hearty burst of laughter from my companion followed this very candid acknowledgment on my part.

"Then, may I ask, what are your intentions for the future?—have you any?"

"At least one hundred," said I, smiling; "but every one of them has about as many objections against it. I should like much, for instance to be a soldier—not in the English service though. I should like to belong to an army, where neither birth nor fortune can make or mar a man's career. I should like, too, to be engaged in some great war of liberty, where with each victory we gained, the voices of a liberated people would fall in blessings upon us ; and then I should like to raise myself to high command by some great achievement."

"And then," said the Frenchman, interrupting, "to come back to Ireland, and cut off the head of this terrible Monsieur Basset. *N'est ce pas*, Tom."

I could not help joining in his laugh against myself, although in good truth I had felt better pleased if he had taken up my enthusiasm in a different mood.

"So much for mere dreaming," said I, with half a sigh, as our laughter subsided.

"Not so," said he, quickly, "not so ; all you said is far more attainable than you suspect. I have been in such a service myself — I won my 'grade' as officer, at the point of my sword, when scarcely your age; and before I was fifteen received this."

He took down the sword that hung over the chimney as he said these words, and drawing it from the scabbard, pointed to the inscription which, in letters of gold, adorned the blade—"Rivoli," "Arcola;" then turning the reverse, I read—"á Lieutenant Charles Gustave de Meudon, 3me Cuirassiers."

"This, then, is your name?" said I, repeating it half aloud.

"Yes," replied he, as he drew himself up, and seemed struggling to repress a feeling of pride that sent the blood rushing to his cheek and brow.

"How I should like to be you," was the wish that burst from me at that moment, and which I could not help uttering in words.

"*Helas ! non !*" said the Frenchman sorrowfully, and turning away to conceal his agitation. "I have broken with fortune many a day since."

The tone of bitter disappointment in which these words were spoken, left no room for reply, and we were both silent.

Charles—for so I must now call him to my reader, as he compelled me to do so with himself—Charles was the first to speak.

"Not many months ago my thoughts were very like your own; but since then how many disappointments—how many reverses!"

He walked hurriedly up and down the room as he said this; then stopping suddenly before me, laid his hand on my shoulder, and, with a voice of impressive earnestness, said—

"Be advised by me—join not with these people; do not embark with them in their enterprise. Their enterprise!" repeated he scornfully—"they have none. The only men of action here are they with whom no man of honour, no soldier could associate—their only daring some deed of rapine and murder. No: liberty is not to be achieved by such hands as these; and the other—the men of political wisdom, who prate about reform and the people's rights, who would gladly see such as me adventure in the cause they do not dare themselves to advocate, they are all false alike. Give me," cried he with energy, and stamping his foot upon the ground—"give me a demi-brigade of ours, some squadrons of Milhaud's cavalry, and '*trois bouches a feu*,' to open the way before us; but why do I speak of this?—some midnight burning, some savage murder, some cowardly attack on unarmed and defenceless people—these are our campaigns here; and shall I stain this blade in such a conflict?"

"But you will go back to France?" said I, endeavouring to say something that might rally him from his gloom.

"Never," replied he firmly—"never. I alone of all my countrymen maintained, that to leave the people here at such a crisis was unfair and unmanly. I alone believed in the representations that were made of extended organization. Of high hopes, and ardent expectations, I accepted the command of their army—their army! what a mockery! When others accepted the amnesty, I refused, and lived in concealment, my life hanging upon the chance of being captured: for fourteen months I have wandered from county to county, endeavouring to rally the spirit I had been taught to think only needed restraint to hold back its impetuous daring. I have spent money largely, for it was largely placed at my disposal—I have distributed places and promises—I have accepted every post where danger offered, and in return, I hoped that the hour was approaching when we should test the courage of our enemies, by such an outbreak as would astonish Europe—and what think you has all ended in?—but my cheek burns at the very thought—an intended attack on the government members of parliament—an act of base assassination—a cowardly murder; and for what, too? to prevent a political union with England! Have they forgotten that our cause was total rupture! independence! open enmity with England! But, *cést fini*. I have given them my last resolve. Yesterday evening I told the delegates the only chance that, in my opinion, existed of their successfully asserting their own independence. I gave them the letters of French officers, high in command and station, concurring with my

own views; and I have pledged myself to wait one month longer, if they deem my plans worthy of acceptance, to consider all the details, and arrange the mode of proceeding. If they refuse, then I leave Ireland for ever within a week. In America, the cause I glory in is still triumphant; and there, no prestige of failure shall follow me to damp my own efforts, nor discourage the high hopes of such as trust me. But you, my poor boy—and how have I forgotten you in all this sad history—I will not suffer you to be misled by false representations and flattering offers. It may be the only consolation I shall carry with me from this land of anarchy and misfortune—but even that is something—if I rescue one untried and uncorrupted heart from the misery of such associates. You shall be a soldier—be my companion here while I stay; I'll arrange every thing for your comfort; we'll read and talk together; and I will endeavour to repay the debt I owe to France, by sending back there, one better than myself to guard her eagles."

The tears ran fast down my cheek as I heard these words, but not one syllable could I utter.

"You do not like my plan; well——"

Before he could conclude, I seized his hand with rapture within both of mine, and pressed it to my lips.

"It is a bargain, then," said he, gaily; "and now let us lose no more time; let us remove this breakfast-table, and begin at once."

Another table was soon drawn over to the fire, upon which a mass of books, maps, and plates, was heaped by my companion, who seemed to act in the whole affair with all the delight of a school-boy in some exploit of amusement.

"You are aware, Tom, that this place is a prison to me, and therefore, I am not altogether disinterested in this proposal. You, however, can go out when you please; but until you understand the precautions necessary to prevent you from being traced here, it is better not to venture into the city."

"I have no wish whatever to leave this," said I, quickly, while I ranged my eye with delight over the pile of books before me, and thought of all the pleasure I was to draw from their perusal.

"You must tell me so three weeks hence, if you wish to flatter me," replied Charles, as he drew over his chair, and pointed with his hand to another.

It needed not the pleasing and attractive power of my teacher to make my study the most captivating of all amusements. Military science, even in its gravest forms, had an interest for me such as no other pursuit could equal. In its vast range of collateral subjects, it opened an inexhaustible mine to stimulate industry and encourage research. The great wars of the world were the great episodes in history, wherein monarchs and princes were nothing, if not generals. With what delight, then, did I hang over the pages of Carnot and Jomini; with what an anxious heart would I read the narrative of a siege, where, against every disadvantage of numbers and munitions of war, some few resisted all the attacks of the adverse forces, with no

other protection save that of consummate skill. With what enthusiasm did I hear of Charles XII. of Wallenstein, of the Prince Eugene; and how oftentimes did I ask myself in secret, why had the world none such as these to boast of now? till at last the name of Buonaparte burst from my companion's lips, as with a torrent of long-restrained devotion, he broke forth into an eloquent and impassioned account of the great general of his age.

That name once heard, I could not bear to think or speak of any other; how I followed him from the siege of Toulon, as he knelt down beside the gun which he pointed with his own hand, to the glorious battle-fields of Italy, and heard from one who listened to his shout of "*suivez moi*" on the bridge of Lodi, the glorious heroism of that day. I tracked him across the pathless deserts of the East, beneath the shadow of the pyramids, whose fame seems, somehow, to have revived in the history of that great man; and then I listened to the stories—and how numerous were they—of his personal daring—the devotion and love men bore him, the magic influence of his presence, the command of his look, the very short and broken sentences he addressed to his generals, were treasured up in my mind, and repeated over and over to myself. Charles possessed a miniature of the first consul, which he assured me was strikingly like him; and for hours long I could sit and gaze upon that cold unimpassioned brow, where greatness seemed to sit enthroned. How I longed to look upon the broad and massive forehead—the deep-set, searching eye—the mouth, where sweetness and severity seemed tempered—and that finely rounded chin, that gave his head so much the character of antique beauty. His image filled every avenue of my brain: his eye seemed on me in my waking moments, and I thought I heard his voice in my dream. Never did lover dwell more rapturously on the memory of his mistress, than did my boyish thoughts on Buonaparte. What would I not have done to serve him? What would I not have dared, to win one word, one look of his, in praise? All other names faded away before his; the halo around him paled every other star; the victories I had thought of before with admiration, I now only regarded as trifling successes, compared with the overwhelming torrent of *his* conquests. Charles saw my enthusiasm, and ministered to it with eager delight. Every trait in his beloved leader that could stimulate admiration, or excite affection, he dwelt on with all the fondness of a Frenchman for his idol, till at last the world seemed to my eyes but the theatre for his greatness, and men the mere instruments of that commanding intellect that ruled the destinies, and disposed of the fortunes of nations.

In this way days, and weeks, and even months rolled on; for Charles's interest in my studies had induced him to abandon his former intention of departure, and he now scarcely took any part in the proceedings of the delegates, and devoted himself almost exclusively to me. During the daytime we never left the house; but when night fell we used to walk forth—not into the city, but by some country road, often along the canal side—our conversation on the only topic wherein we felt interested: and these rambles still live within my memory with all

the vivid freshness of yesterday ; and while my heart saddens over the influence they shed upon my after life, I cannot help the train of pleasure with which, even yet, I dwell upon their recollection. How guarded should he be who converses with a boy, forgetting with what influence each word is fraught, by the mere force of years : how the flattery of equality destroys judgment, and saps all power of discrimination ; and more than all, how dangerous it is to graft upon the tender sapling the ripe fruits of experience, not knowing how, in such they may grow to very rankness. Few are there who cannot look back to their childhood for the origin of opinions, that have had their influence over all their latter years; and when these have owed their birth to those we loved, is it wonderful that we should cling to faults which seemed hallowed by friendship ?

Meanwhile, I was becoming a man, if not in years, at least in spirit and ambition. The pursuits natural to my age were passed over for the studies of more advanced years. Military history had imparted to me a soldier's valour, and I could take no pleasure in any thing save as it bore upon the one engrossing topic of my mind.

Charles, too, seemed to feel all his own ambition revived in mine, and watched with pride the progress I was making under his guidance.

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